A Phase III Architectural Resource Survey: Three Downtown Neighborhoods, Lansing, Michigan

A Cultural Resource Management Study
Prepared for Submission to the City of Lansing
and the Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer

GREAT LAKES RESEARCH, INC.
Archaeology / Cultural Resource Management

A PHASE III ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY: THREE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS, LANSING, MICHIGAN

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GLR REPORT NO. 2000-09

SUBMITTED TO:

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LANSING, MI 48933-1236

15 SEPTEMBER 2000

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ABSTRACT / MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This survey was undertaken as the third phase of survey work that was necessary to inventory the architectural resources of three distinct areas within downtown Lansing, Michigan. Significant research into these areas was initiated with the *Lansing's Central Neighborhood Survey* (Schneider and Sommers 1986), a reconnaissance level survey which documented the majority of the older neighborhoods in downtown Lansing. This survey was extended in the late 1990s as the *Lansing Architectural Survey II* (City of Lansing 1998), which provided reconnaissance level surveys of nine individual areas, and intensive level surveys of eight areas. Based on recommendations presented in the latter report, and the needs and requirements of the City of Lansing, Great Lakes Research, Inc., of Williamston, Michigan, was contracted to provide intensive level survey data for three of the previously defined areas. These included the *River Point Neighborhood*, (2) the *North Capitol Neighborhood*, and (3) the *Michigan School for the Blind.*

Based on the results of these inquiries, all three survey areas, or parts thereof, were recommended as eligible for nomination as National Register of Historic Places Historic Districts.

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SECTION 1.0 - INTRODUCTION

This survey was undertaken as the third phase of survey work that was necessary to inventory the architectural resources of three distinct areas within downtown Lansing, Michigan (Figure 1). Significant research into these areas was initiated with the *Lansing's Central Neighborhood Survey* (Schneider and Sommers 1986), a reconnaissance level survey which documented the majority of the older neighborhoods in downtown Lansing. This survey was extended in the late 1990s as the *Lansing Architectural Survey II* (City of Lansing 1998), which provided reconnaissance level surveys of nine individual areas, and intensive level surveys of eight areas. Based on recommendations presented in the latter report, and the needs and requirements of the City of Lansing, Great Lakes Research, Inc. (GLR), of Williamston, Michigan, was contracted to provide intensive level survey data for three of the previously defined areas. These included the *River Point Neighborhood*, (2) the *North Capitol Neighborhood*, and (3) the *Michigan School for the Blind*. The current study outlines the results of those surveys.

Buildings were found significant under the themes of Architecture, Commerce and Industry, and Education. The context narratives, which give a detailed account of each theme relative to Lansing, are heavily drawn from the contexts presented by Schneider and Sommers (1986) and the City of Lansing (1998), but are updated with current research relative to the three specific neighborhoods.

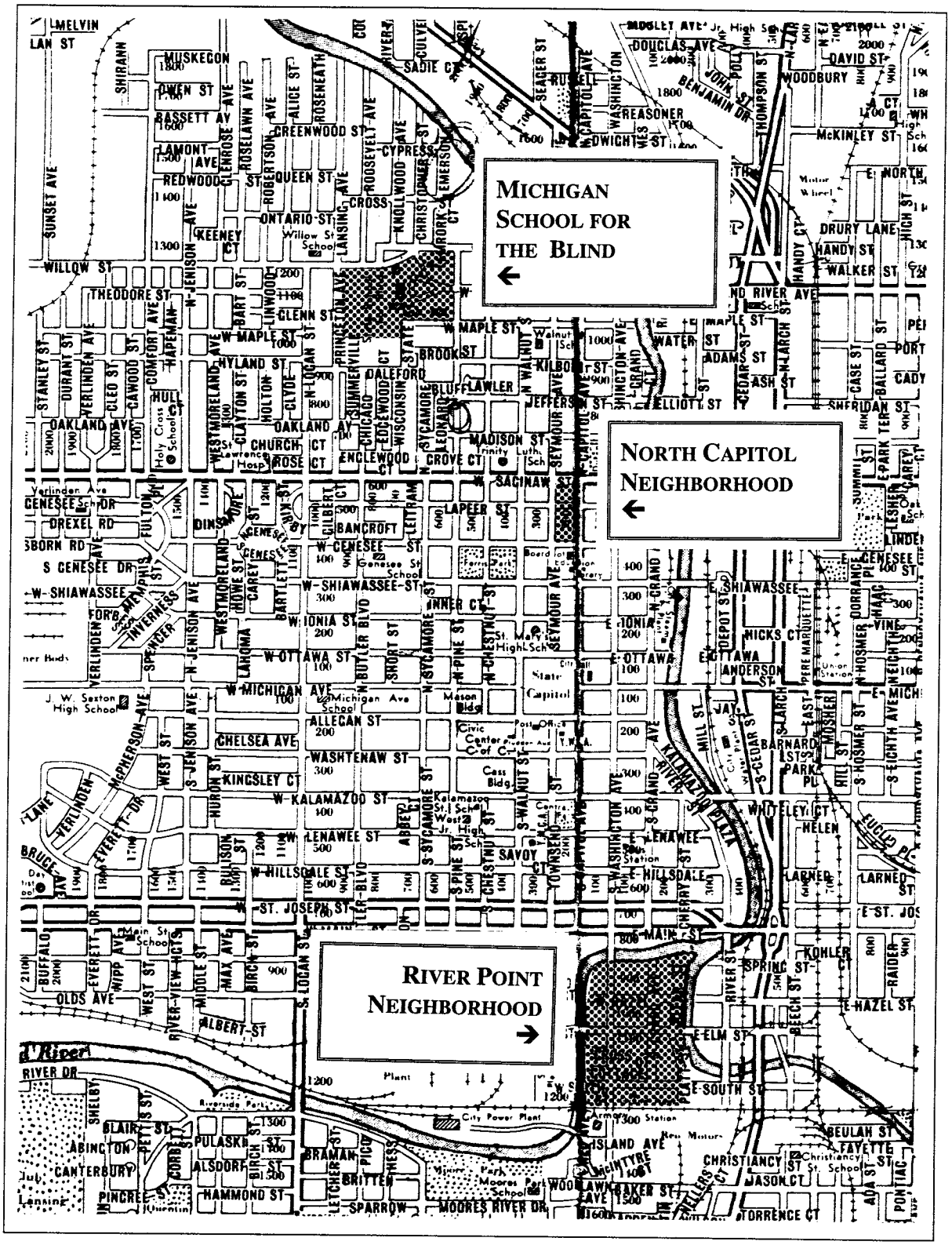

Figure 1. General location of three study areas: (1) River Point Neighborhood, (2) North Capitol Neighborhood, (3) Michigan School for the Blind.

SECTION 2.0 – RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Project Objective

The project objective was to conduct an intensive level inventory of historic and architectural resources within three specific neighborhoods in downtown Lansing, and to enter this information on a computerized survey record within the *Ruskin* database program, with the results to then be available for utilization by the City of Lansing and the State Historic Preservation Officer. For planning purposes, the three survey areas were defined as follows (Figure 1):

- **River Point Neighborhood** Located on the near south side of Lansing, just south of the confluence of the Grand and Red Cedar rivers. Bounded on the west and north by the Grand River, on the east by the Red Cedar River, and the Grand Trunk Western RR tracks on the south (Section 3.0).

- **North Capitol Neighborhood** Located just north of the Capitol Building. Bounded by Saginaw on the north, Capitol on the west, Genesee on the south, and Seymour on the west (Section 4.0).

- **Michigan School for the Blind** Located on the near north side of Lansing. Bounded by Willow on the north, Pine on the east, and Princeton on the west. The southern boundary is irregular but includes Maple and State (Section 5.0).

2.2 Methodology

All resources were surveyed at the intensive level. Properties were then evaluated using the National Register of Historic Places' *Criteria for Evaluation*. Resources considered to be potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as individual sites or parts of districts were researched further. All work was done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation*, specifically, the *Guidelines for Identification - Performing Identification and Guidelines for Evaluation - The Evaluation Process*.

Archival Research

Before field documentation began, preliminary research provided surveyors with a basic orientation to the city's development - so that they would know what to expect and look for out in the field. Maps, public records, newspaper articles, and the State Library of Michigan revealed dates of settlement, early major industries, historic transportation routes, and architectural styles and construction methods common to the region. Evaluation of this information led to the genesis of the historic context theme narrative list.

Fieldwork

In preparation for fieldwork, the City of Lansing's Department of Planning Development provided surveyors with maps of the designated areas. Surveyors canvassed the three areas in a systematic fashion, and created 35-mm color negative images of each of the affected structures.

Evaluations

Following fieldwork, each property was evaluated using the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. Properties were assessed in terms of their historical significance, architectural merit, environment, and integrity, in relation to their respective survey areas (e.g., River Point Neighborhood, North Capitol Neighborhood, Michigan School for the Blind. Properties were defined as contributing or non-contributing.

Mapping

Mapping was done in hand-drawn hard copy.

Computerization

The field form information was entered into the RUSKIN database software program that was provided by the State Historic Preservation Office. Information for each property was entered in the database. Each property entered in the computer program was linked to a photograph and both the form and photograph files were identified with street number and name.

Project Area Surveyed

Three areas were surveyed, which included approximately 171 structures and properties. The River Point Neighborhood included approximately 131 individual structures, although several commercial blocks may have been arbitrarily divided between several addresses. The North Capitol Neighborhood included 22 structures and sites, and the Michigan School for the Blind included 18 structures. Each of the three survey areas were deemed potentially eligible for nomination as local or NRHP districts.

Acres Surveyed

The River Point Neighborhood measures approximately 46.7 acres in overall area; the North Capitol Neighborhood measures approximately 12.7 acres in overall area; and the Michigan School for the Blind has been represented as being 12.9 acres in overall area.

Data Locations

Survey data is on file with:

Michigan Historical Center
Michigan Department of State
717 West Allegan Street
Lansing, MI 48918

City of Lansing
Department of Planning and Neighborhood Development
316 North Capitol Avenue, Suite D-1
Lansing, MI 48933-1236

Contexts

As of 1986, the reconnaissance level survey of Lansing's central neighborhoods (Schneider and Sommers 1986) identified eight relevant contexts:

- Architecture
- Economic Affairs and Technology
- Education
- Ethnic History
- Growth and Settlement
- Industry and Commerce
- Religion
- Transportation

After an in-depth review of the three subject areas covered by this report, it was determined that a variety of contexts were relevant for each.

For the River Point Neighborhood, which includes a complex of residential, commercial, and transportation features that are closely tied to the late 19th – early 20th century rise of Lansing's automobile industry, two contexts were applied. The first context was *Commerce and Industry*, with the *Automobile Industry* representing the major theme, and the second context was *Architecture*, with sub-themes of *Residential Architecture*, *Commercial Architecture*, *Ecclesiastic Architecture*, and *Transportation*.

For the North Capitol Neighborhood, which includes a complex of late 19th and early 20th century residential architecture, it was determined appropriate to the include the entire complex under the *Architecture* context, with sub-themes including both *Architects*, *Residential Architecture* and *Ecclesiastic Architecture*.

The Michigan School for the Blind, on the other hand, could easily be subsumed under the single context of *Education*, with sub-themes including the *Michigan School for the Blind*, *Architects*, and *Institutional Architecture*.